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MATWATCH

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STEVE'S SIDELIGHTS By Steve Beverly

THE ULTIMATE GAMBLE

Never in an era of 99-cent double cheeseburgers did I believe a story would supersede Vince McMahon's roll to a second straight NBC prime time special and split of his Megapovers tag team.

I hope most of you received your MATWATCH EXTRA last week (if not, I'm sure it's a mail service problem) that detailed the early reports on the most serious challenge to McMahon's empire yet. Mind you, the word challenge is exactly that. It does not represent a victory for Turner Broadcasting System, nor does it mean the torch is being passed in pro wrestling.

But the mere fact that Ted Turner has been able to schedule an April 2 pay-per-view show that has the support of most of this country's major cable operators, opposite McMahon's crown jewel, WRESTLEMANIA, is indicative that TBS is not into this industry to be the first runner-up, who if for any reason McMahon cannot fulfill his reign, would take over.

For those of you who are yet to hear, let me outline the story as I have it, point-by-point:

---McMahon fired the first shot in this re-escalated war between the WWF and NWA by scheduling a Feb. 20 live show free on USA Cable from Madison Square Garden. Major cable executives sent letters to both Jim Crockett and McMahon after last April, asking both to stop challenging pay-cable shows with free events because the head-to-head matchups are costing cable operators serious PPV money.

---At least two sources have told MATWATCH that Titan Sports made a demand that the pay-per-view services accept lower shares from WMS, which angered their executives.

---More than a dozen cable operators, including the nation's largest, Tele-Communications, Inc., sit on the board of TBS and own 35% of the company. They, too, were said to be highly incensed over the McMahon Feb. 20 challenge to the NWA CHI-TOWN RUMBLE.

---A high-level series of meetings resulted in the major PPV companies and Turner cable board members asking TBS to produce a counter PPV show to WRESTLEMANIA for April 2. Ted Turner personally gave the go-ahead.

Thus was born WRESTLEMAN '89: THE ULTIMATE GAMBLE (if you think the title has the slightest bit of an inside joke, it is meant to have), tentatively scheduled for the Omni from 4-7 p.m. EST April 2, though Friday morning, the Omni had not been officially nailed down as the site.

MATWATCH attempted three times last week to get an official statement from Titan Sports and our phone calls were not returned. But NWA president Jack Petrik did Friday morning and was quite open about the situation. "We didn't ask for this war and we didn't want it," said Petrik. "We were attempting to live up to our word with the cable operators that we would not engage in any more of these head-on confrontations that are counterproductive for all of us financially."

But Petrik added that the cable operators asked for this show as a measure of strength against McMahon. "When they came to us---and we rely on them for our pay-per-views---we eagerly looked forward to it," said Petrik. "Beyond that, it's a chance for us to say, 'Hey, Vince, it's not two standards here. It's a different turf now.'"

Petrik went on to say, "When we announced this, Vince took the position it's okay for him to put his free show on top of our pay-per-view on February 20th but it's not okay for us to do this to him. After all, he's scheduling WRESTLEMANIA on top of our regular Sunday show (NWA MAIN EVENT), too, if you want to be direct."

In what may appear a minor move on the surface but certainly a key one at this point, Titan signed away James J. Dillon last Tuesday. MATWATCH has been told Dillon was lured by Tully Blanchard and will primarily be a front office person with key responsibilities to be a talent-raider. Two sources have told us Dillon promised Titan he could deliver both Barry Windham and Lex Luger to the WWF. One Titan source was actually telling people Luger has a March 3 start date with the WWF but that is not confirmed and Petrik told us Friday, "We have talked with Barry and Lex and they assure us they are with us."

Just before deadline, MATWATCH received unconfirmed word that Windham's father, Robert (Blackjack Mulligan) had taken a front office capacity with the NWA, which may ensure Windham's continuation with TBS. But on Friday night's AWA show, Larry Nelson plugged Barry as "now competing in the AWA," and on Saturday's FLORIDA CHAMPIONSHIP show, Gordon Solie (obviously at the order of new majority owner Dusty Rhodes) was pushing Windham as one who "has expressed interest in coming to Florida." But MATWATCH has been told Windham, if he considers an alternative offer at all, would not do so

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until after the Feb. 20 show.

McMahon, in addition, was said to originally be considering withdrawing his USA Cable show but will proceed now, although without a planned Hulk Hogan-Big Bossman cage match (Randy Savage vs. Ultimate Warrior will topline).

Titan is also said to be attempting to come back with a sweetened deal for cable operators in an effort to lure them back into the WMS fold but TBS officials have told MATWATCH they have signed contracts from all of the major pay companies to provide the NWA show. As one cable operator, who asked not to be named, told us: "The cable people are not going to back down to Vince, even if he offered them 90% of the WRESTLEMANIA money--which he won't. Their attitude is: he may try to throw us a bone this time but turn right around and bite us before the next show."

WRESTLEMANIA, let us make clear, is not forced totally from pay-per-view. But, as we have been told, barely 20% of the country has more than one PPV channel available, and those are the predominant ones which will still offer WMS. Since most of the top 15 cable operators are backing Turner, WRESTLEMANIA will be made available in many more of the 11 million potential PPV homes. But McMahon will be forced into a heavier closed-circuit concentration, which will not be nearly as lucrative. Last year, at least half of Titan's originally announced closed circuit sites were canceled for poor sales.

A card, of course, is not set for WRESTLEMANIA, but Petrik concedes it's not going to be easy developing a successful show six weeks after CHI-TOWN RUMBLE is tolined by Ric Flair vs. Ricky Steamboat. "We may lose money on the 2nd of April but it is important for us to do this show to prove we're not going to be bullied," says the TBS exec. "Hopefully, our cable people won't lose money on April 2nd. To be honest, the overall total on April 2nd could be the greatest pay-per-view day in history."

One veteran observer outside the NWA and WWF has told MATWATCH: "This is a gamble but it's the kind Ted Turner thrives on. This can't just be an okay show or a good show. It has to be a GREAT show, a blockbuster. If they can put together a show that has people saying, 'Boy, that was great! By the way, who won at WRESTLEMANIA?', they'll be a major player in this game. But if it's just a so-so show and people get angry because they couldn't get WRESTLEMANIA, then they'll be hurt and hurt badly."

Many hardcore WWF fans and MATWATCH readers already are counting out the Turner challenge, if our phone calls are any example. At least eight have told us words to the effect that McMahon has never been defeated and this is just one more contender to be knocked off the block. One reader said, "It's like Pat Sajak trying to challenge Johnny Carson." Could be? But in the four months of Turner NWA ownership, many things have occurred (Steamboat's signing, Dusty's departure, a successful STARRCADE) that skeptics did not believe would happen. Despite denials to other

bulletin writers, Titan officials have to have reason to believe they underestimated the power of their opponent this time.

Ted Turner may just as easily fall on his face April 2 as succeed but his people had to demonstrate their strength, as well as this army of major cable executives, an army McMahon cannot take for granted.

In my view, Turner is going to have to marshal every p.r. force at his disposal to make this show a success. If it were me, I'd have Mr. Turner himself (who at this moment is a bigger national celebrity than any of his wrestlers) go on a whirlwind news conference tour in a dozen or so major cities---including New York---with Flair and the major stars planned for the show immediately following the Feb. 20 Chicago PPV. The idea would be for Turner to sell the importance to the nation of what he's attempting to do and why (and there is no finer salesman in America for broadcasting and entertainment issues than Ted Turner).

I would make sure my CNN people covered at least one of those news conferences and I'd use my own LARRY KING LIVE program two or three times before that show to help get my wrestlers over (King is no stranger to this genre, having interviewed Vince McMahon on his old HOME TEAM SPORTS show two years ago).

Plus, I'd use my contacts to get a couple of celebrities on the level of a Bob Hope or maybe a former wrestling commentator such as Steve Allen to appear on the show---not to overshadow the wrestling but to give the appearance that this is something major that a casual fan has not seen previously from the NWA. And I'd even consider having Lou Thesz come in to referee the main event, particularly should it be a Flair-Steamboat rematch, to give the topline an added importance.

Just as many things Ted Turner has faced, from the very creation of Channel 17 in Atlanta---which was a failing independent when bought it in 1970---the odds are squarely against him succeeding. It does have to be a blockbuster show, or the NWA will be set back in its quest for parity. But it does make for what---at least for now (and I can't believe more surprises aren't in the works)---is the biggest TV wrestling story for 1989 and THE ULTIMATE GAMBLE is exactly what the customer will be advertised.

DUSTY'S FLORIDA PREMIERE STARTS WITH CONSIDERABLE NAME-DROPPING

TAMPA - FLORIDA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING, not yet looking revamped, welcomed Dusty Rhodes back to the Sunshine State this past weekend in a TV show with both Rhodes and host Gordon Solie dropping a number of would-be contenders as headed into Florida.

The show, which featured a brief appearance by Rhodes at the 20-minute mark, opened with a film clip of Dusty and Bill Watts in a match against Dory and Terry Funk from the mid-1970s. Otherwise, most of the standard Florida regulars were featured.

Solie offered Barry Windham, Kevin Sullivan, Gary Hart, Abdullah the Butcher, the Funks, Al Perez, Dick Murdoch and Baby Doll (Nicola Roberts) as "calling the

offices of Florida Championship Wrestling after the American Dream announced his intention to return."

Rhodes taunted Hulk Hogan, Sullivan and Ric Flair during his interview to come to Florida and meet him but---as of deadline---Rhodes has only signed Murdoch and Perez (whose cousin Lou is with the FCM group). Murdoch will meet Dick Slater on TV this week.

But inside sources tell MATWATCH Rhodes will be in Verne Gagne's Feb. 7 battle royal to anoint Larry Zbyszko as AWA champion and has told AWA officials Windham will be there, too (but NWA executives have no knowledge of that move). The AWA plugged Windham as competing with its circuit on its TV show last week but mentioned no dates for Barry, who is scheduled to defend his NWA U.S. title on a Feb. 20 PPV show from Chicago.

HERCULES-DIBIASE SEMIFINAL JOINS
HOGAN-SAVAGE SPLIT ON NBC SPECIAL

In addition to the anticipated splitup of Hulk Hogan and Randy Savage in their battle with the Twin Towers Friday night, Hercules Hernandez is expected to get a revenge match against Ted DiBiase on the NBC MAIN EVENT WWF special.

MATWATCH is forecasting a 12-13 rating for the show, which would be a bit below the 15.2 level posted for the 1988 Hogan-Andre the Giant title change. A 12 rating would give MAIN EVENT a 22-23 share of the homes watching television at that hour.

The lower numbers are predicted because of a stronger ABC comedy lineup than last year. CBS' BEAUTY AND THE BEAST is drawing lower numbers than last year but is still attracting a substantial female audience which is not expected to switch heavily to the WWF.

COMINGS & GOINGS

TITAN'S RESPONSE: Insiders say Titan privately responded to the NWA move with a strong "we're not worried" attitude after dismissing the initial proposal as a "bluff." But both parties are expecting a talent war.

USA FEB. 20: In addition to Savage-Warrior in a "title vs. title," McMahon's free special will include Rougeaus-Bushwackers, Taylor-Battler, Akeem-Studd and Valentine-Neidhart.

WMS BIG 4: Of course, Hogan-Savage tops the Trump Plaza card (which I'm told with Andre vs. Studd, an I-C title match between Anabolic and Rick Rude and Demolition in a handicap tag match vs. Powers of Pain and Mr. Fuji, which means the WWF tag belts won't change until at least summer.

THE J.J. DUMP: Flair's explanation on TBS will be that J.J. was "dismissed as executive director of the Horsemen" because he fell into Eddie Gilbert's trap of bringing in Steamboat.

SHORT TERM: In the immediate run, J.J.'s leaving fouls up several possible scenarios for an impending Flair turn, so George Scott's creative mettle will be tested.

KENDALL TURN: The Kendall Windham turn on NWA syndication last weekend was well done but I wonder what will happen with it, now that Dusty is gone. But Barry outright called Kendall a Horseman on the WORLD WIDE show.

EDDIE, EDDIE: From this space, it seems a crime that Eddie Gilbert is not on that PPV from Chicago. Eddie was the catalyst of the Steamboat-Flair-Windham match and he is one of the hottest babyfaces around right now. I know Luger's presence is importance to the casual fans but if my calls are any indication, much disappointment has been raised that Eddie isn't facing Barry as we'd been led to believe would happen.

DUSTIN'S TRAIL: Gordon Solie has reportedly told some people "we're going to leave Dustin there, for now," meaning the NWA. I wonder what the TBS people think about that.

DUSTY'S TRAIL: The Florida show did show some technical beef-ups, including slo-mo replays on all the victories. The studio was decorated in flags for the first time that made the place look like a clone of the TBS arena. Thanks to my friend J.A.Q. for the quick Fed Ex copy of the show and KLON in Florida for his instant analysis.

BUY-RATES: STARRCADE appears to have done a 2.1% buy-in, now that final figures are nearly in, which would indicate a gross of close to \$4 million. ROYAL RUMBLE figures are far from complete but while Titan claims a 2.8, cable operators are estimating between a 1.4 and 1.9% rate, which would be Titan's lowest ever.

FNN PLANS: In addition to the pilot for PIPER'S PIT in late February, FNN/SCORE is hoping for another pay show in mid-May but still no details.

CALLING TERRY: Terry Gordy and Charlie Platt did a 90-minute call-in stint on WLWI-FM, Montgomery's top-rated country station Wednesday night after the CWF TV tapings.

BOOKING TERRY?: Another of those high-level CWF meetings was scheduled Monday with the prospect of Gordy being offered the booker's job but no one will confirm that.

HOLIDAY OUT: Jonathan Holiday was pulled from the second hour of the CWF tapings when he had to be censored for a tasteless reference to Jesus Christ and a remark that included a slang phrase for breaking wind. Holiday may well be history.

STUBBS/ANTHONY IN: Jerry Stubbs & Tony Anthony were not let go by the CMF as we had been told last week but they are apparently not going to be the permanent bookers, which they had been doing in committee of late.

WCCW TITLES: The old Texas tag titles are now being renamed the WCCW tag titles---not to be confused with the WCCW WORLD tag team championship. Can you explain the logic in that one?

TEXAS BOUND?: Some talk is surfacing that Jarrett is interested in bringing in Brad Armstrong to World Class, now that he's out of pocket with CMF but no word on that.

GOOD LINES: Some classics from the latest WCCW arena program....From Buddy Roberts: "We ARE World Class! We ARE Texas! We ARE the Samoan Swat Team!" (Buddy has not paid copyright fees for that one.) "Von Erichs, your old daddy is so ashamed of you that he don't even come around any more!" And after the concessions ad, from Marc Lourance: "Love those weenies!"

DUSEK'S DEN: Frank Dusek has subbed the last two weeks for Lourance and he just can't carry it as a lead announcer. I wish Jarrett would bring in Lance Russell to take that show over, at least if Marc is on vacation.

MORE TAPINGS: NWA will tape TV in Columbus GA for the fourth straight month, Feb. 13 with Warriors-Abdullah vs. Varsity Club and Gilbert-Hayes vs. Flair-Mindham on tap.

WARD AUDITORIUM?: One thing we proposed on WRCG-AM's TALKLINE last Friday in Columbus is the renaming of the Columbus Municipal Auditorium for promoter Fred Ward, the man who has filled more seats in the building in its 30-year history than anyone. Columbus is the largest city in Georgia not to have a major coliseum and if this 5,300-seat dinosaur is to be its arena, the least the town owes its biggest benefactor is to put his name on the place.

FOX CHAPEL: A crowd of 232 (\$1,392) turned out for a six-event card in Fox Chapel PA Jan. 21 to see John Hercules Gavin win a DQ over Mighty Goliath (he of Memphis past) to retain the North American Heavyweight title and The Terrorists took 2-3 falls from The Allies to keep the Tri-State tag belts.

MIDWEST MOVES: MATWATCHer Bruce Grumert tells us the NWA show Jan. 21 in Kansas City had a very vocal 4,700 but Bruce says the Flair-JYD title match was horrible. Bruce was also at the Jan. 22 WWF show in Omaha which saw Hogan beat Bossman in 7:00 before being attacked after the match. WWF drew 9,200 on Super Bowl Sunday.

READING CURT: MATWATCHer Ed Varner brings up a good point. One of the problems, in Ed's view, of Curt Hennig getting over in the WWF is Curt is just ineffective reading the copy in his interviews. He seemed to be much stronger ad-libbing his spots in the AWA and the lines he's asked to deliver come across anything but "perfect."

PHILLY GANG: You guys in Philadelphia this weekend, think about us. I sure wish I could be there but we've been traveling so much, my folks here aren't too thrilled with me making another trip that would require me to leave Friday.

ANNUALS: Response has been awfully kind concerning MATWATCH '88: THE ANNUAL BEYOND ("Beyond help," as a friend has commented.) I have had several inquiries from late subscribers about how to purchase. I am willing to make another run if I have as many as 25-30 additional orders. DON'T send money yet. The cost will be \$5.50 for the 52-page annual but if you are interested, please drop me a line in the next 7-10 days and if enough interest develops, we will make another run. But thanks to so many of you for your flattering comments.

THE READING ROOM:
The Professional Wrestling Trivia Book
\$7.95, Popular Technology

This goes into one of those "it had to happen sometime" categories. Robert Myers, a native of the Bronx, has come up with a trivia challenge in this 500-question multiple choice journey.

Myers has grouped his questions into five categories: Heroes and Villains, Tag Teams, Legends of the Past, and a grouping that I find a bit puzzling: Women, Midgets and Blacks. Whereas we all know pro wrestling has done little to advance the cause of the black athlete, their segment in this offering seems a bit questionable.

Nonetheless, TPWTB is a fun exercise for casual fans and experts alike. I'm sure most readers could identify the simple challenge, "The hands of stone belong to: a) Roberto Ramos, b) Ronnie Garvin, c) Jerry Lawler or d) Rip Rogers (I hope you said "b"). But how many contestants could nail this one: _____ left the "squared circle" to become an evangelist: a) Paul Bunyan, b) Ed Lewis, c) Jim Wright, d) Rube Wright (the answer is "a").

Myers deserves credit for devoting 100 questions more in the league of older fans who remember the days of Thesz, Haystacks Calhoun, Gorgeous George and George Zaharias. The book is at least a monument to the fact that pro wrestling didn't start in 1984.

One of my personal favorites is in Myers' introduction that "television made me do it," as far as being a catalyst to his addiction to the ring. He reminisces of his youth watching CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING from the old Capitol Arena in Washington, D.C., in which he watched Kowalski, Rogers, Eric and Rocca on his old black-and-white Philco.

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From all I've read, I'm really disappointed in Gagne's conduct surrounding Superclash. He wants that AWA belt back so bad, yet he doesn't even have a decent replacement for Lawler. Now we read that veteran Dutch Mantel is current AWA champ---or is he?

KEN ORNYSCHUK
COUNTRY CLUB HILLS IL

(FSB: The CWA "held up" Mantel's win over Lawler because of heel ref Ricky Morton's actions but that belt will be recognized as the "world" title in the Memphis, World Class and Continental areas since it appears Dusty Rhodes will forge a Florida tie with Gagne.

I just received your 1988-THE ANNUAL BEYOND and I was truly impressed. What I'm saying is it was a masterpiece. Also today, I received an update of your MATWATCH about Turner going on with a PPV on April 2 to battle McMahon. Well, you know what I think? I think Ted Turner is an (body part deleted) if he goes with it. As you can see, I enjoy McMahon and the WWF is my #1 promotion.

WALT MARSHALL
MORRISVILLE PA

(FSB: Thanks, Walt, for the kind words on the annual. I respect your opinion on Mr. Turner but I think a closer look at the reasons behind the April 2 challenge might give you a different perspective.)

Very happy things are going well. Definitely enjoy your sportsletter. You are the Barry Windham of writers. Just don't turn heel, a la Dan Shocket.

BRUCE (BIG BUBBA) SNYDER
COLUMBUS GA

I am so encouraged by the complete turnaround we're now finally seeing in the NWA that I hesitate to make any criticism. When we complain that they've brought in JYD, underused Dr. Death, failed to turn Bigelow, etc., we're only nitpicking because the MAJOR move they HAD to make, they did (by deposing the Dream). Given the talent roster and a return to reason, they can't help but make a monster comeback and it's only the dimensions of the success which are in doubt.

MARC ARONIN
DENVER CO

(FSB: Marc also had some comments about David Crockett which will be published in a future issue.)

I've been watching wrestling on TV for 28 years and I can't remember anyone as awful as David Crockett. He

can't even speak in simple sentences. He is the worst TV personality I can ever remember seeing. How anyone can defend him is beyond me. I feel the best thing Turner can do for the NWA is dump him.

J.M. RUBIN
PORTLAND OR

I have to say I disagree with you on your rating of the CWF TV show in the last MATWATCH. I know it wasn't GREAT but I think it was decent and deserved a RESTHOLD or RESTHOLD-PLUS, not a BOMB-PLUS. Admittedly, Idol was a "zero," and the Continental Cat is simply embarrassing but I enjoyed the heavy heel tint to the show and the videos were okay.

DAVID WILLIAMSON
CLEVELAND TN

(FSB: Let me mention that David is one of our most loyal MATWATCHers in the Tennessee area and like anyone else, the rating you at home would give a show is just as valid and accurate as is mine---just a matter of personal perspective. But David and I both share the view that CWF is in dire need of a transfusion.

SPECIAL NOTE: Bill Kunkel of Woodhaven, N.Y., also wrote in the last 10 days to express surprise at what he called my "rather meek reaction" to the gag order that has been placed on NWA wrestlers from talking to newsletter writers. Rather than publish Bill's entire letter, I wanted to take a couple of paragraphs to address his valid point.

Bill, as Richard Hyatt---my colleague from Georgia---will tell you, I've never grown terribly concerned about gag orders. When I was a controversial TV newsmen in Columbus in the late '70s and early '80s, the mayor and city manager of the town gagged their employees four times from talking to me and it never affected my ability to get stories.

No, such an action doesn't make me extraordinarily happy but if you're a good reporter, you find other ways to get your information. Plus, I hasten to reiterate, the Turner executives have been a refreshing change from the Crockett people who would never return my calls. Jack Petrik's staff has been very attentive to my questions---and honest. The Crocketts even ignored my request last summer to allow some Auburn students admission to a match in Montgomery to shoot a music video as a class project. So, if my reaction seemed mild---it's just that I've been through this before and it really won't stifle my information flow, believe me.

TV TEMPO (Week of Jan. 23-29)

RATING SCALE: Pinfall! - Must See PILEDRIVER - Excellent POWERSLAM - Good DRAW - Average RESTHOLD - Fair BOMB - Poor PLUS - Midscale rating.

(FLORIDA) - Nasty Boys d. Mark Starr/Rick Fargo; Scott Hall d. Cliff Sheats; Johnny Ace/The Terminator d. Tony Diamato/El Diablo; Mike Graham/Steve Keirn d. Star Riders; Brett Sawyer vs. Lou Perez no contest when Dick Slater, The Steelman attack both men.
INTERVIEWS: Dusty Rhodes returns to challenge Hulk Hogan, Ric Flair, Kevin Sullivan to come to Fla.; Slater brings out a "turned" U.S. Steel as The Steelman. RESTHOLD.

(WWC) - Jason the Terrible d. Invader III; Victor Jovica d. El Solitario; Carlos Colon d. Kendo Nagasaki; TNT d. Don Kent; Frank Burns/Magnificent Martin d. Butch Cassidy/Masked Midget. DRAW.

(ATLANTIC COAST) - Jimmy Garvin d. Gene Ligon; Deaton Bros. d. Tommy Angel/Bob Emery; Mitch Snow/Scott Armstrong d. Larry Stephens/John Savage; Todd Champion/Ricky Gibson d. George South/Trent Knight; M.O.D. Squad d. David Isley/Rick Nelson; Rock & Roll Express double DQ v. Buddy Landell/Doug Somers. RESTHOLD-PLUS.

(SOUTHERN) - John Michaels/Karate Kid d. Bucky Sieglar/Invader; Joel Deaton d. Scrap Iron; Georgia Pover d. Steve Bennett/Chance Myers; SOUTHERN TITLE: Tommy Rich retains in double countout with Terry Gordy; 6-MAN: Dino Minelli/Steve Lawler/Nick Busich vs. Mr. Wrestling II/Chic Donovan/Ross still going as show ends. DRAW-PLUS.

(PMTW) - At WWF Omni show...INTERVIEWS: Brainbusters, Bad News Brown, Demolition. CMF: Jerry Stubbs/Tony Anthony break Davey Rich's arm; SCM: Split of Rich-Gordy tag team; ACM: Rock & Roll d. Stephens/Knight; STAMPEDE: recap of recent shows; WWC: Batten Twins d. Kansas Jayhawks; CWA: Beauty & the Beast attack on Bill Dundee/Tracy Smothers; PORTLAND, Top Gun attacked on interview set; WCCW, recap of Eric Embry Jr. heavyweight title situation. MARS WRESTLER OF WEEK: John Studd. DRAW-PLUS.

(CMF) - CMF TITLE MATCH: Tom Prichard vs. The Bullet ends in major brawl when Prichard unmasks Bullet (who turns out to be Brad Armstrong) while the real Bullet lurks outside the ring; Tony Anthony/Jerry Stubbs d. The Falcon/Bill Hollis; Black Bart d. King Harley; Mike Jackson d. The Count; Danny Davis d. The Hunter (Dale Veasey); Mike Davis/Masa Chono d. Randy Hogan/Gene Miller; KNOXVILLE: Bullet wins DQ over The Stormtrooper when The Dog runs in; REPLAY: Armstrong-Prichard hair spray angle. RESTHOLD.

(AWA) - Top Guns d. Chris Curtis/Tony Leone; Larry Zbyszko d. Jim Evans; Wahoo McDaniel d. The Menace; Mean Mike Enos d. Billy Bold Eagle; Don Muraco d.

Frankie Defalco; LADIES' TITLE: Wendi Richter d. The Dazzler. ANGLE: Decision to strip Jerry Lawler of AWA title for no-showing defenses. BOMB!

(WCCW) - Cactus Jack Manson d. Tony Falk; Eric Embry/Brickhouse Brown win DQ over Manson/Gary Young when Super Black Ninja runs in but J.J. Funk saves; Chris Adams d. Mike Hernandez; Jeff Jarrett/Kerry Von Erch d. Samoan Swat Team. DRAW-PLUS.

(NWA/SYND.) - [NWA PRO]: Butch Reed d. Trent Knight; Abdullah the Butcher d. Bob Emery; REPLAY: Ricky Steamboat/Eddie Gilbert d. Ric Flair/Barry Windham; Gilbert/Kendall Windham no contest vs. Barry Windham/James J. Dillon when Kendall attacks Eddie and slingshots him. DRAW-PLUS.

[WORLD WIDE]: Michael Hayes/JYD win DQ over Russian A's when Paul Jones interferes; Midnight Express d. Mike Justice/Mike Jackson; Kendall & Barry Windham d. Keith Steinborn/George South; Other winners: Reed, Kevin Sullivan/Mike Rotundo. REPLAYS: Steamboat-Gilbert vs. Windham-Flair; Kendall Windham attack on Gilbert; Road Warriors-Varsity Club TBS brawl. RESTHOLD-PLUS.

(CWA/SYND.) - Wendell Cooley d. Keith Eric; ARENA: Beauty & the Beast attack Bill Dundee; Dundee invites B&B out, introduces Adrian Street as his new partner to "handle the weirdos."; Phil Hickerson/Shogun/Samurai draw v. Jeff Jarrett/Tracy Smothers/Scott Steiner; Sid Vicious/Jimmy Golden/Robert Fuller skedded vs. Frazier/Thompson/Johnson but Stud Stable wants Frankie Lancaster to have Vicious' slot. Sid is attacked by Stable and saved by Jeff Jarrett; ANGLE: 14-minute review of Dutch Mantel winning "world" title with help from heel ref Ricky Morton. Morton is shown taking money from Mantel. Jerry Jarrett holds up belt. PILEDRIVER...one of this promotion's best-mixed shows in months.

(WWF) - [SUPERSTARS]: Tully & Arn d. Tim Horner/Jose Luis Rivera; Brooklyn Battler d. Reno Riggins; Hercules d. Tony Mirta; Other winners: Jim Neidhart, Demolition, Curt Hennig, Bad News Brown; REPLAY: Royal Rumble Warrior-Rude posedown. BROTHER LOVE v. Megapowers/Elizabeth. RESTHOLD.

[CHALLENGE]: Terry Taylor d. Danny Davis; Dino Bravo d. Scott Casey; Rick Martel d. Dale Veasey; Bret Hart d. Barry Horowitz; Other winners: Powers of Pain, Bushvackers, King Haku. INTERVIEW: Twin Towers. RESTHOLD-PLUS.

[SPOTLIGHT]: Ronnie Garvin vs. Bravo double countout; Rockers d. Dale Veasey/Bob Blake; Hennig d. Rivera; Other winners: Rick Rude, Powers of Pain, Bushvackers. REPLAY: Red Rooster-Bobby Heenan-Battler saga. RESTHOLD.

(LEARNING THE ROPES) - In this area, the second run in four weeks of match where Robert (Lyle Alzado) deals with his principal's sadness over the death of his cat while the kids try to talk the principal into having a school dance. WRESTLING GUESTS: The Fantastics, who defeat Agent Steel and an unseen partner in a match. No rating offered because of repeat showing.

(NWA/TBS) - [MCM]: Ricky Steamboat d. Russian Assassin Victory. Afterward, Ricky takes over-the-top dive onto Ric Flair but Barry Windham attacks. Eddie Gilbert comes out for save but is posted and takes vicious shot to neck. Gilbert does stretcher job and suffers "broken nose." NWA TV TITLE: Rick Steiner d. Eddie Sweat; Kendall Windham (heel) d. George South; Other winners: Hayes & JYD, Reed, Gilbert, Rotunda/Steve Williams, Lex Luger, M Ex, Road Warriors, Ivan Koloff, Murdoch. SHOW OPEN: Steamboat introduces wife Bonnie and son. RESTHOLD-PLUS...angle was strong but rest of show rather so-so.

[A.M.]: REPLAY: Steamboat/Gilbert d. Flair/Windham; Hayes/Sting d. Steel/Mark Collins; Original M Ex d. South/Randy Barber; Other winners: Abdullah, Russian A's, Varsity Club. RESTHOLD.

[MAIN EVENT]: All matches from other syndie shows...NWA TV TITLE: Steiner d. Russian A. Victory; Kendall-Gilbert vs. Barry-Dillon match from NWA PRO; Fantastics d. Original M Ex from previous WORLD WIDE. DRAW-PLUS...matches were acceptable even if borrowed and Dangerously's schtick with Tony Schiavone was excellent.

LINE OF THE WEEK - 1. Hulk Hogan, WWF: "I love Elizabeth every bit as strong as the Macho Man...in a different way." 2. Dusty Rhodes, FCW: "The Hulkster, himself; Ric Flair---you understand---I AM the man and I'm home in Florida and you've got to come home to get me." 3. Ric Flair, TBS: "I'm a lot closer to Ted Turner than Steamboat is, Jim Ross. You remember that at payroll time." 4. Jim Cornette, TBS: "If I can't beat a crumb like you, Paul E., I'd rather be washing dishes at Denny's." 5. Paul E. Dangerously, TBS: "I've gone home with Jimmy Cornette's mama---I might as well go see mine." 6. Michael Hayes, TBS: "If I talked about my love life, you'd have to put your feet up and sit back." 7. Austin Idol, CWF: "When the stork delivered him (Jonathan Holliday), the stork got arrested for carrying dope." 8. Dick Slater, FCW: "I'm not Ric Flair. I'm not Kevin Sullivan and I'm not Hulk Hogan and I'm in Florida." 9. Jim Ross, NWA PRO: "I don't believe a female elephant would consider Abdullah a sex symbol." 10. Dangerously, TBS: "There ain't no Freebirds when there's only Michael Hayes." 11. Brickhouse Brown, MCCW: "I was born with my brown nose---you want to tell people how you got yours, Iceman?" 12. Kevin Sullivan, TBS: "I'm legally insane." 13. Road Warrior Hawk, TBS: "Deviated septums, internal hemorrhaging, torn cartilage---these are the things dreams are made of." 14. Verne Gagne, AWA: "A shortage of words was never one of his (Larry Zbyszko's) handicaps." 15. Cornette, WWF: "Neil Armstrong wanted to go to the moon. Chevy Chase wanted to go to Wally World. And Paul E., I want to get you out of wrestling." 16. Cornette, WWF: "You're not going to look like Gary Cooper in HIGH NOON, Paul E. You're going to look like Don Knotts in THE SHAKIEST GUN IN THE WEST." 17. Bobby Heenan, WWF: "Hitting the Hitman

over the head with a guitar won't work. There's nothing there." 18. Larry Z, AWA: "Every promoter hates me from coast to coast." 19. Gary Hart & Paul E., TBS: GARY, "He's (Abdullah's) fascinated with your phone." PAUL, "It is a heckuva gimmick." 20. Ricky Steamboat, TBS: "Eddie Gilbert took my bullet." 21. Randy Savage, WWF: "When the Megapowers go through the Twin Towers, it'll be like a fault line going through a foundation."

STRONGEST COMMENTS - 1. Ric Flair, TBS: "This is wrestling. This is NOT family entertainment!" 2. Lee Marshall, AWA: "Ricky Rice could have the best dropkick in the sport today." 3. Ross, TBS, to Flair: "Your composure was always your strong point. Now you're losing it."

NICKNAMES OF THE WEEK - 1. Hogan, WWF, for "The Megapowers-Elizabeth Love Triangle." 2. Dusty Rhodes, FCW, for calling his return to Florida his "Flamingo Madness Tour."

BEST PICTURES - 1. WWF, Hogan-Savage handshake on Bro. Love set. 2. NWA MAIN EVENT, TBS, for closeup of Dangerously telling fans to shut up.

WHISTLER OF THE WEEK - Dangerously, TBS, for trilling "Mr. Touchdown, U.S.A." on A.M. show.

WORST INTERVIEW - Gordon Solie, FCW, with the MELONS girls, a group who answered three questions, "Yes," "It's great," and "That's right."

DREADED GLITCH AWARDS - 1. FCW, for camera going horribly out of focus as Dusty approaches Solie's desk. 2. TBS, for hand-held cameraman getting in picture during interview of Butch Reed.

BLOOPER AWARD - TBS, for spelling The Butcher's name ABDULA on bump graphic.

BOO AWARD - AWA, clearly for stripping Lawler of belt after the six-month unification buildup and---if, in fact, it turns out to be false---for advertising Barry Windham.

TUBE TALK

All of the WWF shows were carried by the Megapowers seg with Brother Love with little other excitement....Of course, the TBS Saturday night show was so hot on the 21st, it was impossible to live up to but the pacing of this show seemed to drag. I much prefer the way we were getting one good solid match in each hour rather than one for the whole two....Tony Schiavone played a terrific straight man for Paul E.'s routine on MAIN EVENT and the bit at the end where Paul goes, "Hey, Ted!" and give the illusion of going off camera to buddy up to Turner was priceless....Terry Gordy's first CWF appearance is next week.

Tim Horner was among the WWF wrestlers in matches on the convention floor of NATPE in Houston. Jim Ross was part of the TBS staff beefing up syndication sales for NWA PRO and WORLD WIDE.

THE READING ROOM (Cont. from Page 4)

It's a book any fan can have fun with and would make a nice time-passer with friends on a long trip. TPMTB is miles away from Myers' current project, a spy novel. Maybe he'll come up with a way to weave a pro wrestling sequence into that book, too.

MATWATCH SHOPPERS NETWORK

KEITH D. WILLIAMS, 749 N. BROAD #103, ELIZABETH NJ, has a list of 200-plus tapes he's interested in selling or trading.

PRO WRESTLING TORCH, P.O. BOX 201844, MINNEAPOLIS MN 55420. I can't say enough about Wade Keller's excellent biweekly bulletin which features a color picture in each issue and good reader contributions from around the U.S. The rates are \$1.25 an issue and \$32.00 per year. An excellent read.

THE WRESTLING REPORT, 15 PENROSE AVE., KITCHENER ONT N2A 1E9. Just got a copy of Greg Oliver's bulletin which focuses on Canadian mat action. It's \$5 for 6 issues with a mix of interesting graphics.

BRUCE GRUMMERT, 1212 D ST. #12, LINCOLN NE, 68502, is interested in purchasing CWF T-shirts and other souvenirs. I suggest writing the CWF at ONE WCOV AVENUE, MONTGOMERY AL 36135.

JEFF MULLINS, 4708 CANYON RIVER CT., SAN JOSE CA 95136, is trying to locate a newsletter about a fictitious wrestling circuit. Write Jeff if you have details.

GLENN FOX, 432 DEWEY PLACE EAST, SEATTLE WA 98112, still has a nice set of British wrestling tapes on VHS, including some with Owen Hart, for sale at \$30 a tape.

BACK ISSUES OF MATWATCH: We've had an increasing number of inquiries from new subscribers. They are \$1 apiece or a package of any five for \$4. Please specify the numbers you would like. And allow at least 3-4 weeks for delivery on the earlier issues as it does

...Brian Pillman, now skedded for a Feb. 12 start with NWA, is still waiting on firm word from George Scott, who apparently was unfamiliar with Pillman when Scott arrived. Brian is one of those young rising stars the NWA badly needs....I'm already hearing speculation that Dusty is going to use an early tie with Verne Gagne to eventually try and take over Gagne's time on ESPN. Would you be surprised?

take time to duplicate.

THE PRO WRESTLING TRIVIA BOOK, available for \$7.95 plus \$2 for postage/handling from POPULAR TECHNOLOGY, 17 STATION ST., BOX 643 BROOKLINE VILLAGE, BOSTON MA 02147.

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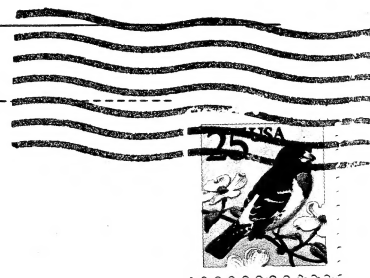
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